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Study of the scattering of ^{15}C at energies around the Coulomb barrier

J D Ovejas¹, A Knyazev², I Martel^{3,4}, O Tengblad¹, M J G Borge¹, J Cederkall², N Keeley⁵, K Rusek⁶, C García-Ramos⁴, T Pérez⁴, L A Acosta⁷, A A Arokiaraj⁸, M Babo⁸, T Cap⁵, N Ceylan⁴, G De Angelis⁹, A Di Pietro¹⁰, J P Fernández¹⁰, P Figueroa¹⁰, L Fraile¹¹, H Fynbo¹², D Galaviz¹³, J H Jensen¹², B Jonson¹⁴, R Kotak¹⁵, T Kurtukian¹⁶, M Madurga¹⁷, G Marquinez-Durán⁴, M Munch¹², A K Orduz¹⁸, R Honório¹³, A Pakou¹⁹, L Peralta¹³, A Perea¹, R Raabe⁸, M Renaud⁸, K Riisager¹², A M Sánchez-Benítez⁴, J Sánchez-Segovia⁴, O Sgouros¹⁹, V Soukeras¹⁹, P Teubig¹³, S Viñals¹, M Wolinska-Cichocka⁶, R Wolski²⁰ and J Yang⁸.

¹Instituto de Estructura de la Materia, Spain

²Lund University, Sweden

³University of Liverpool, United Kingdom

⁴University of Huelva, Spain

⁵National Centre for Nuclear Research, Poland

⁶Heavy Ion Laboratory, Poland

⁷Instituto de Física-UNAM, Mexico

⁸KU Leuven, Belgium

⁹INFN Laboratori Nazionali di Legnaro, Italy

¹⁰INFN Laboratori Nazionali del Sud, Italy

¹¹Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain

¹²Aarhus University, Denmark

¹³LIP Lisbon, Portugal

¹⁴Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden

¹⁵Queen's University Belfast, United Kingdom

¹⁶Centre Etudes Nucléaires de Bordeaux Gradignan, France,

¹⁷Texas A&M University, USA

¹⁸Ganil, France

¹⁹Department of Physics and HINP, Greece

²⁰Henryk Niewodniczanski Institute of Nuclear Physics PAS, Poland

E-mail: ³imartel@uhu.es

Abstract. The neutron rich carbon isotope ^{15}C is the only known case of an almost “pure” $2s_{1/2}$ single-neutron halo ground state configuration. At collision energies around the Coulomb barrier the reaction dynamics is expected to be dominated by single neutron transfer and breakup. To investigate these effects, we have measured the scattering of ^{15}C with a ^{208}Pb target at 65 MeV at the HIE-ISOLDE facility in CERN (Geneva, Switzerland). The preliminary data demonstrates the presence of a strong long-range absorption pattern in the angular distribution of the elastic cross section. The results are discussed in the framework of Optical Model calculations.

1. Introduction

Nuclear systems such as ^6He , ^{11}Li or ^{11}Be are known to have an extended neutron distribution, the so-called neutron halo [1]. Halos are formed in weakly bound nuclei close to the neutron drip line, where the valence neutrons can tunnel out the barrier with larger probability. This effect enhances the



diffuseness of the nuclear surface, leading to an extended density distribution known as the nuclear halo. The presence of a halo can be probed at high collision energies by the observation of narrow momentum distribution in the breakup fragments and large interaction cross sections [2]. At Coulomb barrier energies (~ 5 MeV/u), the halo structure manifests itself with a strong absorption pattern in the angular distribution of the elastic cross sections, where the nuclear rainbow completely disappears [3].

The nucleus ^{15}C has the last neutron in a $2s_{1/2}$ wave [4]. This favours the possible presence of this halo structure in spite of the relatively large binding energy for this last neutron of $S_n=1218.1(8)$ keV [5]. The total interaction cross-section is about 30% larger than its neighbor isotope ^{14}C , and the transverse-momentum distribution exhibits a very narrow width of only $67(3)$ MeV/c [6]. Despite its interest [7], there are no data on the scattering of ^{15}C at Coulomb barrier energies. Coupled-channels calculations [3] show that the dynamics should be determined by the competition between single-neutron transfer and breakup. We investigate the scattering of ^{15}C with a ^{208}Pb target at 65 MeV at the HIE-ISOLDE facility at CERN (Geneva, Switzerland) (experiment IS619) to elucidate its behaviour.

2. Experimental setup

The experiment was carried out at the XT03 beamline of the HIE-ISOLDE facility at CERN (Switzerland). The radioactive beam was produced via nuclear reactions on a CaO primary target placed in a hot-cathode plasma source irradiated with the 1.4 GeV proton beam from the CERN Proton Synchrotron Booster (PSB). After extraction, purification and mass-separation, the ^{15}C ions were post-accelerated up to 4.37 MeV/u by the HIE-ISOLDE superconducting linac.

The experiment was carried with GLORIA detector system (Figure 1), which consists of six 16×16 two-stage DSSSD silicon-telescopes, with $40 \mu\text{m}$ (ΔE) and 1 mm (E) thicknesses, respectively [8]. Two high-purity ^{208}Pb targets ($>98\%$) of 1.5 mg/cm^2 and 2.1 mg/cm^2 thickness were used for the measurements. The ^{15}C beam had an average intensity of $3 \cdot 10^3$ pps at the Scattering Experiments Chamber (SEC). A typical ΔE - E particle identification spectrum of the forward telescope A is shown in Figure 2 (Left). Despite the large spread arising from the lead straggling, the detector telescope can separate the regions corresponding to $^{15}\text{C}^{5+}$ and other contaminants like $^{15}\text{N}^{5+}$.

As the Coulomb barrier in the $^{15}\text{N}+^{208}\text{Pb}$ scattering system is around 79 MeV, much higher than the nominal collision energy of 65 MeV, the angular distribution follows a pure Rutherford angular distribution shown in Figure 2 (Right). The ^{15}N data was therefore used for normalization and solid angle calculations. The experiment-averaged fraction of carbon to nitrogen was $\simeq 0.03$.

3. Data analysis and experimental results

A preliminary data analysis has been carried out for the two forward telescopes A and B, which cover the first 15° - 65° Lab of the elastic angular distribution. The data from the other four telescopes, covering laboratory angles up to 165° is still under analysis.

The ^{15}C and ^{15}N elastic scattering yields have been integrated for each of the 16×16 pixels of the telescopes. The scattering angle subtended by each pixel has been obtained by a χ^2 fit of the angular distribution of the ^{15}N yield assuming a pure Rutherford scattering. The elastic cross section of ^{15}C scattering normalized to Rutherford was obtained from the ratios of ^{15}C to ^{15}N yields, which removes the solid angle dependence. Finally, the data collected in the different pixels with similar angles were statistically averaged and normalised to unity as at 20° we expect Rutherford scattering behaviour. The resulting angular distribution is shown in Figure 3.

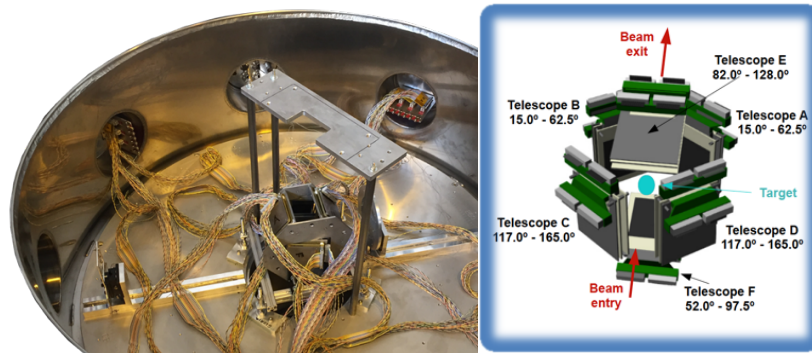


Figure 1. Left: Setup of GLORIA in SEC. Right: 3D representation of the silicon detector arrangement (note the 90° rotation as to the left figure).

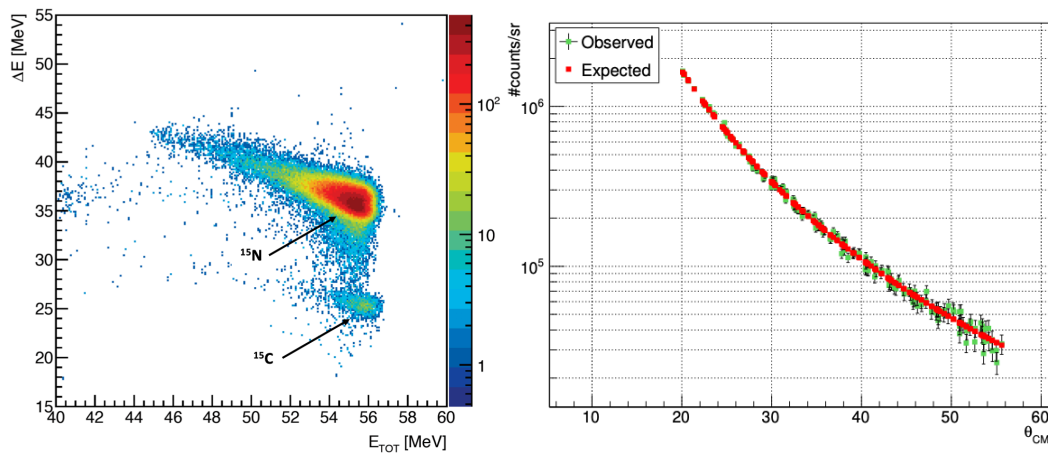


Figure 2. Left: ΔE - E 2D plot of the forward telescope A covering 17°-21° Laboratory angles. Contributions of ^{15}C and ^{15}N scattering are clearly identified. Right: Fit of the elastic scattered ^{15}N ions angular distribution (green dots) in telescope A using a Rutherford scattering angular distribution (red dots).

The angular distribution of elastic scattering provides useful information on the interactions governing the relative motion, as well as the relevance of non-elastic channels through the deviation with respect to Rutherford scattering. In Figure 3, the effect of the halo in the Coulomb barrier scattering of ^{15}C is illustrated by comparison to the well-known system $^{12}\text{C}+^{208}\text{Pb}$ at the same collision energy [9]. We observe the expected effects found in previous halo systems, like the disappearance of the rainbow and the strong absorption pattern. A significant deviation from Rutherford scattering occurs already at CM angles around 40°, which corresponds to a distance of closest approach of ≈ 21 fm in a classical Coulomb trajectory. Might the final data analysis confirm this result, the long-range absorption would be similar to that found in the Coulomb barrier scattering of the two-neutron halo ^6He [9]. This extraordinary absorption might be due to the unique s-wave nature of the halo wave function in ^{15}C .

To further investigate this effect we have carried out a preliminary Optical Model analysis of the angular distributions. The optical potentials were parametrized in terms of the usual Woods-Saxon forms, with real and imaginary volume parts. As the data analysis is in a very preliminary stage, the calculations didn't aim to fit the data but just to reproduce the overall angular trend. The results are summarised in Table 1 together with the case of ^{12}C from Ref. [10]. In order to reproduce the ^{15}C scattering data a large imaginary diffuseness of $a_{i0} = 1.560$ fm has to be introduced, giving a reaction cross section of $\sigma_R = 3035$ mb, about seven times larger than the value of $\sigma_R = 429$ mb found for ^{12}C scattering [10]. This extraordinary large imaginary diffuseness suggests an extremely extended neutron

distribution comparable to that of the ^6He isotope. This is the first dynamical study carried out so far for the halo nucleus ^{15}C at Coulomb barrier energies.

Table 1. Optical Model analysis of the present data on $^{15}\text{C}+^{208}\text{Pb}$ scattering at 65 MeV lab, and for $^{12}\text{C}+^{208}\text{Pb}$ [10] at the same collision energy.

	$V_0(\text{MeV})$	$r_{i0}(\text{fm})$	$a_{r0}(\text{fm})$	$W_0(\text{MeV})$	$r_{i0}(\text{fm})$	$a_{i0}(\text{fm})$
$^{15}\text{C}+^{208}\text{Pb}$	32.90	1.256	0.560	22.10	1.256	1.560
$^{12}\text{C}+^{208}\text{Pb}$	65.50	1.282	0.463	163.71	1.265	0.365

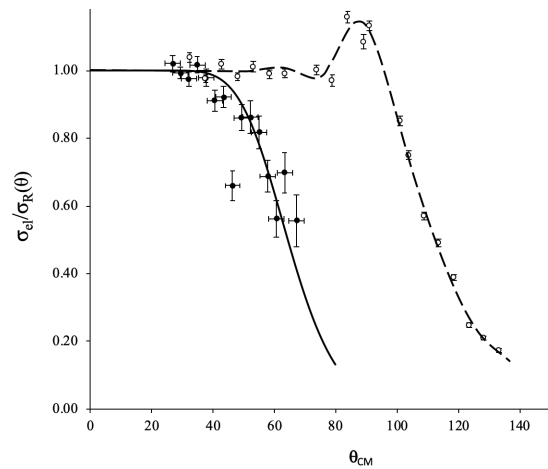


Figure 3. Angular distribution of the elastic cross section normalized to Rutherford for the system $^{15}\text{C}+^{208}\text{Pb}$ (full circles, present work) and $^{12}\text{C}+^{208}\text{Pb}$ (empty circles, Ref. [10]) at 65 MeV. The solid and dashed lines are OM calculations, which parameter values are given in Table 1. See text for details.

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